

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) announced that two leading universities that serve deaf and hard-of-hearing students would be teaming up on an effort to increase those students' participation in the health care field.

Slaughter announced a path-breaking partnership between the National Technical Institute for the Deaf and Gallaudet University that would lead to a detailed set of recommendations for increasing participation by the deaf community in medical school, nursing and other health care-related fields.

The formation of the Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community would have input from the National Center on Deaf Health Research at the University of Rochester Medical Center, and the Rochester General Health System.

"Rochester is the home to three institutions, all of which are represented here today, that are internationally recognized leaders in education and career development for deaf and hard-of-hearing students and their leadership in Rochester is making this Task Force possible," said Slaughter. "One of the major challenges facing us now is the critical shortage of health care specialists at all levels of training to care for the citizens of our nation and that challenge coincides with another, much lesser known serious challenge; the limited opportunities for qualified deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in this country to pursue careers in health care which is why I am pleased to announce the Task Force on Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community."

Rochester is the home of one of the largest concentrations of deaf people in the country with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 residents whose primary language is American Sign Language.

The task force has a distinct Rochester feel as more than half of the 17 member group is from NTID, RIT, the University of Rochester Medical Center or the Rochester General Health System. A list of the task force members is included below.

Slaughter made the announcement in Washington today along with Rochester Institute of Technology President William Destler, NTID Interim President Dr. James DeCaro, Gallaudet University President Dr. Alan Hurwitz (a former President of NTID), Dr. Vivian Lewis, and others this morning at the Capitol.

“This unprecedented partnership, with institutions that have had decades of experience in this field, will open doors for deaf and hard-of-hearing men and women entering the health care professions, be it as physicians, nurses, technicians or physician assistants,” said NTID Interim President James J. DeCaro. “And the deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing communities they serve will be better for it.”

“RIT is proud to be on the ground floor of this unique partnership,” said Rochester Institute of Technology President Bill Destler. “Future students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing will have access to more state-of-the-art training, more hands-on experience and more career choices than ever before. We couldn’t be happier to help make this happen.”

“Gallaudet University is delighted to join this strong partnership with the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester Medical Center to create more opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing people in the health care fields, and to ultimately improve the lives of deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing people around the country,” said Gallaudet University President T. Alan Hurwitz. “The University is pleased that faculty members from our bioscience programs can contribute their expertise to this vitally important effort.” “The University of Rochester Medical Center is committed to developing and expanding partnerships with the deaf community and other leading institutions that share our goal of reducing health disparities,” said Dr. Vivian Lewis, Associate Dean for Faculty Development - Women and Diversity at the University of Rochester Medical Center. “Since 2003 the University of Rochester has been at the forefront of research into the health of deaf and hard-of-hearing people, through the Rochester Prevention Research Center: National Center for Deaf Health Research, funded by the Centers for Disease Control. The University of Rochester relies on a robust collaboration with the deaf community and both local and national experts to conduct this research into how to alleviate the health disparities that effect deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. This Task Force promises to solidify those collaborations and put us closer to the goal of improving the health of the deaf community.”

Under the terms of the task force, the group will meet for 18 months before coming forward with a set of recommendations.

Slaughter is a long-time supporter of the hard-of-hearing community and has worked closely with NTID in years past. She said today that health care reform was a victory for deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans. Health care reform will help deaf children this year by ending discrimination against children with pre-existing conditions; and by 2014, the ban of pre-existing

conditions will apply to adults as well.

### **Health Care Careers for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Community – Task Force Members**

Irene Leigh, Gallaudet University, Psychology, Co-Chair

Rose Marie Toscano, National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology  
Liberal Studies, Co-Chair

Kathy Arnos, Gallaudet University, Genetics Program

Gary Behm, National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology  
Engineering Studies

Nancy Chin, University of Rochester Medical Center, Department of Community and  
Preventative Medicine

Richard Doolittle, Rochester Institute of Technology, College of Science

Caroline Kobek-Pezzarossi, Gallaudet University, Psychology

Vivian Lewis, University of Rochester Medical Center, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Daniel Lundberg, Gallaudet University, Chemistry

Raymond Merritt, Jr., Gallaudet University, Biology

Kathleen Miraglia, National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology,  
American Sign Language and Interpreter Education

Robert Pollard, University of Rochester, Psychology

Deidre Schlehofer, University of Rochester, National Center for Deaf Health Research

J. Matthew Searls, National Technical Institute for the Deaf/Rochester Institute of Technology,  
Cultural and Creative Studies

David Snyder, Gallaudet University, Chemistry and Physics

Gloria Wilder, CORE Health, Washington DC

Donna VanHousen, Information Services, Rochester General Health System